

**Home : Sermons : November 5, 2006****Kingdom Confidence – Luke 18:1-17**

Introduction – Where does confidence come from to continue to press God for blessing, for answers, protection, or deliverance? Where does assurance come from to get up and know you are right with God? How do you know that you are resting in biblical confidence and not in sinful presumption? As Jesus continues to declare His coming kingdom, the work on the cross, and the wrath upon those who will reject Him, answers are given for that generation – and for ours.

Confidence to Persist in Prayer (vv1-8a) – Jesus has just finished telling this generation of the cataclysmic coming of the Son of Man to unbelieving Israel (17:20-37). He has warned them that as believers, there will be a delay to His coming wherein they will wish He would come sooner (v22). Jesus encourages His disciples to remember in such times to persist in prayer “*and not lose heart.*” There is, of course, a multitude of personal applications for us in every trial we encounter. But the first point Jesus has in mind is the current context of Jerusalem.

And so, the widow represents true Israel who must plead when her Husband has gone for His vindicating, avenging return. One cannot help but hear the words of John’s Revelation 6:9-11 in this as well.

Prayer ought to therefore come with confidence that God loves to avenge His people, especially those who are the weak (Ps 10:12-16). Persistence ought to characterize our prayers because *God will avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him*; that is His promise and our confidence. Our faith is in God who has ordained the trial, ordained the prayers, ordained the persistence, ordained His delays and His speedy (and perfectly timed) answers.

“Nevertheless...” (v8b) – Much debate surrounds the meaning of v8 and the rhetorical question of Jesus, “*will He really find faith on the earth?*” However, I take this last half of the verse as a leading question to the following parable. In other words, what kind of faith will the Son of Man really find when He returns. One kind is a faith in oneself, a self-reliant arrogance that will land a man in the center of Christ’s judgment. The other kind is a faith, a confidence, in the mercy of God over sinners.

Confidence from Humility (vv9-14) – Jesus encourages us to come to Him boldly with our requests (Heb 10:19-23), like the widow in His parable. But our boldness is not in ourselves, but in the faithfulness of God. The Pharisee prays “with himself” or possibly to himself. In any event, His prayers never leave the Temple. He comes with his something in his hand and leaves with nothing. In stark contrast, the tax collector comes with nothing in his hands and leaves with everything. Here again is the sin of presumption. The Pharisee thought he was quite something. There is a kind of piety that is very dangerous; it can lead a man to all kinds of self-deceptions. Be careful that you are not too quickly thanking God that you are not like that Pharisee.

As opposed to presumption, there is a confident assurance that comes with humility before God. The tax collector beat his breast and said *literally*, “propitiate me,” which means to turn away the just wrath of God. Isaiah knew who he was before God (Isaiah 6) and is willing to be Jehovah’s ambassador.

Childlike Confidence (vv15-17) – Even the disciples do not comprehend the depth of what Jesus is getting at. Luke shows this by adding this next paragraph. The disciples were rebuking those who brought babies to Jesus; in Mark’s account Christ takes these little ones in his arms, lays His hands on them and blesses them. Do they think He is too busy for the children? Do they think the babies are not ready to be brought to Jesus? From Jesus’ admonition in v 17 it appears that at least they think that babies need to grow up and be like adults to receive the kingdom. Quite the opposite, Jesus claims that adults need to become like babies and little children.

This is not just an exegetical issue. It is also an attitudinal issue. The problem is not exclusively Baptist or paedobaptist. Today, in both traditions, a terrible error exists where children are encouraged to doubt their faith. Childlike faith is required for entrance into the kingdom. Confirmation papers or years of experience are not required.

Receiving the Children – Because we must become like little children, it follows that we must receive the children into our midst as well. This has great application in our welcoming of new ones into families and into the church. All children need discipline and training, but all of the children of believers should be welcome in the worship of God and in the discipleship

and fellowship of His people.

Kingdom confidence is faith in God who is answering the prayers of His people according the promises He has given us. It is a confidence based upon His kindness and mercy towards us and not according to any merit of our own. It is an unsophisticated, natural confidence, like the trust a baby places in his father and mother. We are to walk and live in that faith even as we grow up into maturity.

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